

ABROAD

MOSCOW

The Last Enemy

The last hangman of the Stalin era, Semyon Denisovich Ignatiev, former minister of state security, has died at the age of 79. His death is a reminder of the brutality with which the Stalin regime governed until the last moments of the dictator's life. It was Ignatiev who contrived, at Stalin's behest, the famous "Doctors' Plot" of early 1953, just before Stalin's final illness. At least 15 high-ranking Soviet doctors were arrested, tortured, and forced to confess to having poisoned leading Soviet figures. The doctors were accused of having been Zionist agents or, alternatively, of having been members of the British secret service. According to a contemporary report, Stalin planned to make the doctors submit to a show trial and then hang them publicly in Red Square, a ceremony that was to launch a vast pogrom against Soviet Jews. Other accounts say that the Doctors' Plot was no more than the overture to one of the periodic purges of party cadres. In any case the tyrant died before his motives were fully evident. Ignatiev was also responsible for other campaigns of terrorism, notably the "Crimean Affair," which resulted in the torture and execution of all of Russia's remaining Yiddish writers. After Stalin's demise, Ignatiev was dismissed first from his post and then from the Central Committee Secretariat, following an accusation by *Izvestia* of "political blindness and lack of vigilance." Nevertheless, unlike many of his former colleagues, he survived to enjoy an honorable retirement under Stalin's successors. On his seventieth birthday he was awarded the Order of the October Revolution for "services to the Communist Party and the Soviet state."

WARSAW

The Roots of Bankruptcy

Polish economic planners—and their colleagues in other Eastern European Communist countries—are thoughtfully licking the wounds inflicted by their too rapid and too broad embrace of Western technology and production methods. According to a report issued by the Organization for European Economic Development, Poland in the Seventies, under the government of Edward Gierek, made far too heavy an investment in the West and has paid for it, principally and most visibly, in the Polish enterprises that were started with Western licenses and know-how and became dependent on their suppliers beyond the capacity of the Polish economy. The Gierek regime, in the euphoria of 1970s détente, jacked up its imports year after year by huge percentages through the power of its central-planning mechanism. Western technology thus implanted could not satisfy its demands within Poland, and so raw materials, components, and spare parts had to be imported at an equivalent rate. Today the Polish economy is almost bankrupt, and there can be no question any more of supplying these plants from the outside. Another reason for the failure of this Western orientation was that the Polish government was unable to create a potential for high-technology exports. Traditional exports, such as coal and foodstuffs, which could have been easily developed, were

neglected in favor of chemical and engineering products. The result was that a major percentage of hard-currency loans obtained in the West went for materials and servicing of existing structures and not for the development of new investment.

ST.-LAURENT-SUR-MUR

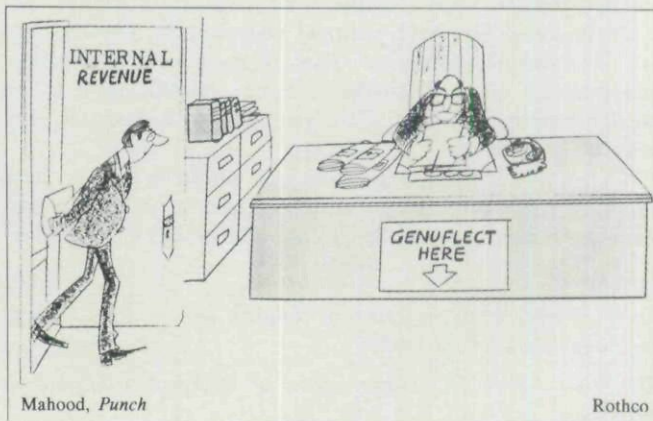
Remembrance

Thousands of Allied veterans are expected to visit the Normandy beaches this coming June, the fortieth anniversary of the D-Day landings and the last time, from both the actuarial and the sentimental point of view, that a really large and enthusiastic turnout can be counted on. Queen Elizabeth II of Britain will be among the commemorators and so, no doubt, will high dignitaries from the United States, not to mention France. On the twentieth anniversary, in 1964, General de Gaulle, then president of France, boycotted the celebrations on the grounds that French troops had not participated in the actual landings at Omaha, Utah, and other Normandy beaches. Instead, the general had been informed of the great invasion of his own country by a British regimental captain and without proper respect for what the French leader thought was his ceremonial, not to say his historic, position. The result, in 1964, was that embarrassed French local officials had to handle the entire burden of the exalted foreign visitation themselves, without the presence of so much as a ranking minister from Paris. This year, with General de Gaulle long gone from the scene, the surviving invaders will be greeted, not merely by local dignitaries, but by high-ranking members of François Mitterrand's government.

GREENHAM COMMON

Life-Threatening

Women demonstrators besieging the American Air Force base here in order to register their protests against the deployment of the cruise missile in Britain may unwittingly be responsible for the snuffing out of another form of life. The clearing of brushwood and scrub surrounding the long perimeter fence that forms the demonstrators' front line has resulted in the destruction of a rare butterfly, the Purple Emperor. But the military may be coming to the rescue with a promise to cover the emplacements in which the missiles are sited with special native plants that normally provide the Purple Emperor's preferred habitat. On the other hand, the ruckus caused by the demonstrations does not so far appear to have affected the local nightingales, six of whom were heard singing one day recently.



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